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Notes

[Contributions in the form of notes or discussions should be sent to John A. Scott, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.]

ATHENAEUS ON AESCHYLUS AND HOMER

Practically all works on Greek literature quote Aeschylus as saying that his own poems are but fragments from the great banquet of Homer, and, as so few of the plays of Aeschylus depend on the traditions of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the assumption is made that here Homer must include a far wider range than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, hence the belief that Aeschylus regarded Homer as the poet of the Theban and Trojan cycle. The passage is found in Athenaeus viii. 347e and is as follows: οὕτω μοι δοκεῖ μηδὲν μὲν ἐσθίειν τῶν ἀνδρὶ προσηκόντων, τηρεῖν δὲ τοὺς ἐσθίοντας εἰ παρείδον ἢ ἄκανθαν ἢ τῶν τραγανῶν τι ἢ χονδρῶδες τῶν παρατεθέντων, οὐδ' ἐπὶ νοῦν βαλλόμενος τὸ τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ λαμπροῦ Αἰσχύλου, ὃς τὰς αὐτοῦ τραγωδίας τεμάχῃ εἶναι ἔλεγε τῶν Ὀμήρου μεγάλων δείπνων. "This man seems to me to eat nothing which befits a man, but to watch those eating to see if they overlook the spine, the gristle, or a bit of cartilage from the pieces served, not considering the words of the noble and illustrious Aeschylus, who said that his own dramas were portions from Homer's great feasts." The meaning clearly is, that some miserable fellow sat searching for bits of food overlooked by others while Aeschylus was able to secure whole portions from the banquets set before Homer. Aeschylus is thus saying that he is using themes left him from the great feasts which were served to Homer, but which that poet left untouched, hence his poems are on subjects which Homer might have chosen, but did not. This phrase cited by the critics to show that Aeschylus regarded Homer as the author of the cycle means just the reverse.

The whole contrast in Athenaeus is between the man who searches for miserable bits of food left over by the guests, when Aeschylus was able to find entire portions from the great banquets set before Homer. The banquets served to Homer were so abundant that Aeschylus could feast on courses he had left untouched. Certainly Aeschylus cannot be assumed to say that he is taking food already consumed by Homer, but it must be food uneaten, just as the neglected parts were picked up by the poor fellow described in Athenaeus. The courses Homer left untouched were the traditions of the Theban Cycle, the Epic Cycle, and probably all else save the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Yet this passage is set forth by all the critics as final proof that Aeschylus regarded Homer as the author of all these. There could be no better proof than this that Aeschylus regarded Homer as the poet of but a small part of the epic traditions.

The word *τεμάχη* which is generally translated as "fragments" or "crumbs" really means large unused portions, as this chapter in Athenaeus in an earlier sentence shows, where it is said that someone always picks out the small parts and lets the fine portions go by, τὰ μεγάλα τεμάχη παραπεμπόμενος. It was thus the boast of Aeschylus that although the great banquets had been put before Homer that poet had left untouched fine portions for him.

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ILIAD xxiii. 670 ONCE MORE

Professor Scott and I are not going to entertain our friends by wrangling over the interpretation of one line of Homer. But if we both are sincerely convinced of different renderings of *Iliad* xxiii. 670-71:

ἦ οὐχ ἄλῃς ὅττι μάχης ἐπιδέομαι; οὐδ' ἄρα πως ἦν
ἐν πάντεσσ' ἔργοισι δαήμονα φῶτα γενέσθαι,

the matter ought to be worth settling. First, however, I must observe that, writing doubtless from memory, Professor Scott does not show his usual punctiliousness in reporting me. I quoted no parallels "to prove that Epeius was 'sore' because they had made fun of his fighting." That others had animadverted on his deficiencies would be at the most an inference from the tone of his speech. His "soreness," if my vulgarism may pass again, might be due to his own realization of his weakness as a warrior. The point is that he is apparently suffering from an "inferiority complex" which finds compensatory expression in his repetition of the Homeric commonplace that not all men have all gifts. His gift is boxing, and he is boastfully indignant at the very idea of anybody challenging his superiority in that. I cited parallels to illustrate this Homeric commonplace, and I also quoted with interpretation I believe every Homeric occurrence of ἦ οὐχ ἄλῃς in order to show what is the invariable emotional connotation of the phrase in Homer. Professor Scott does not even allude to this, my main argument, but says vaguely that I "quoted a parallel to prove that Epeius was 'sore' because they had made fun of his fighting."

My interpretation, for the rest, is that of Leaf, of Monro, of Lang Leaf and Myers, and, I presume, of practically all commentators. I merely added the confirmation of an unnoticed point of Homeric usage and a little would-be humorous surplusage of slangy commentary on Epeius' character as revealed in his speech. Professor Scott's argument is directed entirely to this slangy surplusage.

The parallel from Virgil is interesting but of course cannot decide the meaning of the Homeric passage. Virgil was at liberty to vary Homeric incidents. In this case he plainly does. When Entellus claims the prize by default Virgil had already said

. . . . nec quisquam ex agmine tanto
Audet adire virum manibusque inducere caestus.